

## Transcription: Tom Floyd

---

*Today is September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I am interviewing Mr. Tom Floyd over the phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas. Mr. Floyd is at his home in Florida, Texas, and this interview is taking place in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board's Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you so much for taking the time to let us speak with you today a little bit about your time in the service.*

**Tom Floyd:** You're more than welcome.

*And sir, the first question we usually start off with is just ask you maybe to tell us a little bit about your life before you went in the military, maybe a little about your childhood and where you're from and that sort of thing.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, originally I was born and raised in New Orleans. My mother was from the Cayman Island, and my dad was from Florida, Texas, and we wound up in New Orleans, and going to school there and so forth and during the mid-30s my mother died, and from then on we were kind of running a ragged pace trying to figure out what we'd be doing and where we were gonna wind up. But as God would have it, we came through it pretty good and I finished up my high school and went right into the military.

*And tell us a little bit, sir, about how it was you came to join the military. Were you still in high school when Pearl Harbor was bombed?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yes, in fact I was in it about a year, somewhere along there. We had it broadcast into our school room when President Roosevelt declared war on Japan, and that was the beginning of thinking about military.

*When you heard that broadcast, did you feel then pretty certain that you would be going in the military at some point pretty soon, too?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, I sure did, even though I wasn't, I had another three years to go. But I was certain of it. In fact, I even tried to get in the Navy before I got out of high school, and they refused, turned me down on account of I was wearing glasses. In those days, you could not wear glasses, but now the sailor boys you see now got glasses.

*That's right.*

**Tom Floyd:** But I told 'em that's OK, I'll just go ahead and join the Army then.

*Tell us about what it was like when you finally enlisted to join the Army.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, it was kind of a hard thing because my dad was working and my mother was already passed on, and I think my dad was a little bit sensitive about the fact that his baby boy, 18 years old, was going to war. He didn't show up to see me off.

*Did you have any siblings, sir?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, he was in the Navy already, my older brother. But as time was, everything worked out on that and we got a little anxious about it, but as time moved on, it kind of settled in with it, and frankly, I had about a smooth a time as a guy could have.

*Where did they send you for your basic training?*

**Tom Floyd:** Basic training was at Fort Hood, Texas.

*Fort Hood. Tell us a little bit about what Fort Hood was like then.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, Fort Hood was something like you would see in a cowboy movie back in those days, but it was great. I enjoyed every bit of it. Fortunately, too, the CO of our training unit saw fit to make me Acting Gadget or Acting NCO, and I don't understand why they really picked me out for that, but I was a Corporal, Acting Corporal for 17 weeks in basic training.

*So you went through 17 weeks there at Fort Hood, and then where did you go upon your graduation?*

**Tom Floyd:** From that, I went to academy school against my own will, and got that finished. Then the Battle of the Bulge started, and they were shipping out of Hood by the dozens, I mean every few minutes. They gave me a five-day leave to go home and from there I went to Washington, Fort Meade. And got all fixed up there physically and the medical end of it, and new uniforms, everything. Then from there was shipped out to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey and from there we crossed the river and got on a ship that used to be a cruise ship, but it turned into a military ship to haul GI's back and forth from the United States to England. It was a good trip. We took part in the convoy. Then finally we broke loose from the convoy and got on into England without any problems at all.

*The unit that you were with, had you gone through all of boot camp with them?*

**Tom Floyd:** No, not a one.

*So when you got to Fort Meade, they were all new to you, all the troops.*

**Tom Floyd:** Correct.

*Tell us a little bit if you would sir, what those guys were like.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, I find the biggest portion were a little anxious just like I was, wondering what you're gonna do, who you will work under and what unit you'd be attached to, and what are you gonna do. Even with all the training you had, you still had questions about why you came, were doing all those things. Then I was fortunate enough to hook up with a guy that kind of felt the same way I did and instead of sleeping in the hull of the ship, we slept on the deck for five nights, wrapped around a good blanket to keep from getting sea sick. We never got sick at all. Half the ship was sick, but the trip was in a convoy, and then it broke loose from the convoy and got into England.

*What happened upon your arrival in England?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, they took us off that thing and marched us to a railroad station and we loaded up on the railroad station, and this was like about 1 o'clock in the morning, and they took us down to Weymouth, which is on the very bottom of England going across the channel to France. When we got down there, everything was moving right along. They fed us and moved us to where the ships were, and we ended on a ship that couldn't house more than maybe 25 or 30 men at a time, and convoyed all the way over to La Halle, France. It was snowing and we had I guess about 4 foot of snow around that particular area, around the tent. So we were pretty cold and we never had enough to keep yourself warm. But they treated us well, and I think probably as good as they could do under the circumstances.

*What did you and your men know about where you were going at that point?*

**Tom Floyd:** Nothing. No, they kept it all to themselves until we got to Belgium, I believe it was.

*So when was this approximately?*

**Tom Floyd:** This was all in January of '45.

*January 1945.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah.

*So you arrive in France and you're with your unit. Tell us what happens from that point.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, we got into La Halle, France, got on a boxcar train. There must have been 50 boxcars on there, and we were loading them up with GI's, no material or anything other than your own personal gear. We had at least 30 guys in our car. The cars are not like United States cars, but it was enough to hold them people. And in the process of it, you know, we picked up a little jug of alcohol, and some guys got sick. I got sick off the nest, and I guess I had the GI's for about six hours, and that was my last time to drink.

*Now at that point, you were still an Acting Corporal?*

**Tom Floyd:** No, I was strictly a Private.

*OK, so that was only in basic training.*

**Tom Floyd:** Correct. But in the mean time, what would be interesting for this is while we were headed for Belgium, there was two of these big buzz bombs that the Germans were pumping into England, passed over us. That thing was, you could hear it roar for 20 miles it was so loud. And very few people got to see 'em like we did.

*Wow, so tell us sir a little bit what it was like with your unit, kind of some of the people that were in charge of you, and just that sort of thing, what you were thinking as you were getting on that train and going to who knows where.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, if it wasn't for the fact that there was a lot of shooting the bull on that train, I think we would have all gone nuts, so we had a decent time. A lot of guys would pick on other guys just for the heck of it and keep the thing going, but basically I think it was you couldn't do

any better on the train where we were going, and we finally got to Malmedy, Belgium, and that's where we got assigned to Company G of the 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. While we were there, and this really stuck out in my mind pretty heavy, we got there that night about midnight in this little town, Malmedy, and Malmedy is one of the towns that had the big massacre, and we went into this building and half of us collapsed. The other half was still good, but it was like midnight, and while we were in there, we heard somebody holler attention, and naturally everybody snapped to, and the Commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division came by to welcome us to the Division, and went around and shook hands with everybody, come to believe it. He was a heck of a good Commander. And I found out as I got in, they stuck me in a division that was really A #1 not only in taking care of their people, but in fighting the battle. They called 'em \_\_\_ of the European War. You don't hear much of that because they didn't do a lot of broadcasting about how well they were operating, but it was a good one.

*And when you guys arrived in Malmedy, I'm sure you all knew then about the massacre that had taken place there previously.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yes, our unit was one of the units that came through there and helped clear that mess up. In fact, we had one guy that got hold of a Gerry and set him up in the middle of this little town and made him strip down to his bare skin for the things they did to our men, he was passing it back on. Well, they had to go take him off that because America is not supposed to do those kind of things.

*What had you and your men been told about the German forces in terms of surrendering to them because up to that point, I guess before the Malmedy massacre, they expected to be treated fairly. Did that change the way you approached situations if you were to be captured by the Germans? Was it the situation now that you would never surrender to the Germans type of thing?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, that was already understandable. We understood in basic training and all that kind of think, but at that particular moment, never heard a word. It was strange, but everybody knew what they would do and something like that would happen again. In fact, we had one NCO, he got over a couple of Gerry's and made them strip down to their skin and stand out in the snow for about 8 or 10 hours. The rage in the guys' minds without bursting out, it was pretty heavy. It was a cruel thing they did and wasn't necessary. But that was our introduction. In fact, we stopped on the way in, we were gonna deuce and a half and 30 of us in there, and they had one guy sitting among the trees, and in that he had a tank. I don't know which one he was, no one I know, most of all, not the Bradley, but it was another tank, anyway he had a pistol in his hand and said anybody would like to have a P38? A P38, the only thing I know about a P38 was a Air Force plane. In fact, I made one when I was going to school, a model. So we had a lot of little surprises there, but we got to our place in Malmedy and they had the schoolhouse, like a farmhouse, they took that over and setting up all the GI's there who were coming through, including us. We got assigned to Company G and like at midnight at night, and we went into this one big classroom, and somebody had knocked the windows out I think because snow was coming in, but on the other end of the room was a big haystack. Somebody hauled a lot of hay in there, and the squad leader told us that if we just make a hole in there, burrow in there and take a sleeping bag and stick it in there and just let your head hang out, said you'll have the best night's sleep you'll ever get over here. And he was right. Boy it was cozy, warm, and we had about two or three inches of snow inside that building and don't know how much more they had outside. It was a lot. But they took care of us and got us broke in good.

*How long were you there before you saw your first combat?*

**Tom Floyd:** About three days. When they finally broke through that mass of water when they all get rid of a, they, we stayed there. Then we crossed on a wooden, flexible bridge from one place to the other and got to the other side of the river. We were running and trying to establish ourselves on the other side during the darkness of morning. You could see spotlights around there, too. And the ground was so soggy that we didn't walk, we ran from one point to another. I stepped in a slug of mud, this was like about 1 o'clock in the morning. I kept going but my boot wouldn't go. It stayed in the mud. It had such great vacuum, it sucked that boot right off my leg. But I kept on going. Then I got a little smart then and said man, you can't operate with just one boot. So I went back and found that thing in the dark. Then I turned around and caught up with the rest of the people again. So that was my introduction to warfare.

*So you went ahead and you crossed, was it you said the Elbe River?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah.

*Where did your unit move to at that point?*

**Tom Floyd:** We got to, hold on, let me see. OK, we went through the Hambach Forest, then a town where the captain was Konigshoven. We spent some time in there and taking care of all our necessary warrants. The next assignment was to go into this forest, and that's not a picnic because you have too many tree bursts, the Germans would blow the top of the trees off with their artillery pieces, and between the artillery metal itself and the wood flying through there, it could take your life. But one situation we got into that we captured and they put us out there on the outside edge of the town, and there were some trenches already dug, and foxholes from I guess the Germans did that. Anyway, we got in them and they gave us the password and about morning, 2 o'clock in the morning we got to looking in this darkness and we could see, it looked like a row of people walking down this road. There was two up front and they were moving to the opposite side. The fellow that was with me, we waited and waited to see if anything would break loose and we'd get on \_\_\_ over that way. Our lieutenant of the platoon, Tom Gimblin, he happened to come that way, and it was pretty dark, and we challenged him and he wouldn't say anything. So we were getting ready to shoot that buzzard. He finally opened his mouth up and told us he was Lieutenant Gimblin. I said Lieutenant Gimblin, I want to be the one to congratulate on the fact that we didn't pull our fingers on that trigger. He laughed. But he had a good sense of humor, but I don't know whether he was testing us out or not. He didn't say. But if I ever had to go back to battle again, I'd still go with this guy. He is so good.

*Where was he from?*

**Tom Floyd:** He was from Pennsylvania at the time, I believe. One of these eastern states up around New York and Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. In fact, I think he's still alive. I got to meet him again in a reunion of the unit. He was a great man. I have great respect for him.

*How many men were in your platoon?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, at any one given time, the biggest I guess we had was probably 25, and they would change so quickly it'd make your head spin. But I never did get wounded. I was fortunate in many, many ways.

*While you were there during that time and guys were coming and going, were most of them new additions that would come and join your platoon?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, oh yeah, they'd come in there. You could tell the look on their face they were brand new, and I wonder if I looked that way, too, when I came up there. One thing I can tell you about during that we experienced coming up, before I joined the unit they had a castle, Belgium castle they were using for military service, plus a depot to fulfill the need of different units with personnel they had coming in day and night. And we had one fellow on the ship coming over and he's still with us, he was bragging about what he was gonna do to the Gerry's and so he can get back to his five girls I think he had, something like that. Anyway, they put him on duty, guard duty. I had got it, I was on guard duty before him. But when I came back and got in my cot and I was cold and trying to warm up, he come in blowing his top off about he was gonna wipe out the Gerry's and he was gonna get home and take care of his daughters and all that sort of stuff. So I rolled over and just started to go to sleep and I heard this big bang. Someone had shot his toe off, and boy, you talk about something to devalue you pretty quick is when you shoot yourself on purpose.

*Oh, he did it on purpose?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah. And that was one of the bad things I experienced.

*I bet.*

**Tom Floyd:** But when we came in to Liege, Belgium, that was one of the places, depots for hauling people in and processing and moving them out to the units that need them. They took us to one big old building and issued M-1's to us and then took us down to another place where we'd fire that thing and zero it in, and they give us I think was six, seven bullets we could zero and rifle in, which are not enough. Then we turned around and they sent us on. But this castle, boy, it was a beautiful thing, but we were all sitting out there in these tents around that thing. I only saw one other castle that they, I can't remember the name of it, that they used it for three days of recreation and to get our troops back in mind again, and get some rest and get caught up on writing mama's and papa's and wives and kids, and you could play ping pong, you could shoot pool, you could watch movies just coming in from the United States, and it was pretty good. After that two days were over, you'd go back to the front and try to keep yourself from getting killed and kill the other guy. But that was a pretty good setup there. But I was sorry to see that guy do that to himself. That will live with him all his life.

*So they sent him home, I assume, pretty quickly after that.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, they gave him a discharge and it wasn't honorable either.

*No. Speaking of home life, did you get much mail from home?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, I guess I got my portion of it. There wasn't a real heavy load of it. My brother was in the Navy, he was in the Pacific, so I didn't hear from him, and my dad wasn't big on corresponding. I think he just didn't know what to say to me, and I had a few other friends left back home that I'd get some letters. I wasn't pretty heavy on mail, but we always had mail call and I was glad for that, and a lot of those guys had been there longer than I were was there, was need those letters to keep the morale going.

*So tell us then after you left the R&R and you went back to the lines, what was a typical day like? Were you dug in pretty frequently or were you on the move a lot? Did you do a lot of patrols? How would that go?*

**Tom Floyd:** Not a lot of patrols. We were a division that was always a spearhead of any movement or invasion or whatever it may be. 30<sup>th</sup> had a heck of a reputation and was well made up with good leaders, and we had to practice to cross the R\_\_\_ River, then we had to practice on of course the Rhine River, and they didn't miss anything. They wanted everything to be just right in order to get you there and get you back, and I always appreciated that. But we tried every kind of water vehicle that they had, and practiced on these different maneuvers and then came back to get ready to go across the Rhine River. There was a forest out from us oh, maybe about three or four miles that we camped out in that thing for about three days, and we were having a good time stealing cows and hams from some of the neighbors around there. There was a lot of lootin' going on. But we did all that, dug in, made a hole in the ground about six foot long and four foot wide, and three foot deep that we'd sleep in during the night, but after that they moved us up to a little town that all the houses were evacuated. No people around anywhere within 10 miles. And we had a table map and showed you all the different things we'd encounter. And the boats that we were gonna go across in were already down there, this side of the levy of the Rhine River. When midnight came, then we moved on down to that. Then these Lancasters from England came over and had bombed the fool out of this town, a big town. I forget the name of the town now, but anyway, when they were doing the bombing we were taking the boats and walking down to the river and putting it in the water. And we had eight men in there, four on each side, and one engineer in front and one engineer in the back, and he was running a big 50-horse Johnson, and had fluorescent type paddles and he could give directions right or left or going ahead. So when the time came for us all to go, all hell broke loose with artillery fire. I mean it was every which way, and it was just typical war there. But we, all the boats got to the other side of the river without any problem except one, and I was so curious about what was going on that I had stuck my head up just high enough to see this boat drifting away from us that had the engine tilted up, trying to do some work on it. Well, we made our run. We got mixed in with one of the other companies, F Company, and we helped them establish their foothold there, and finally we worked our way back to where we were supposed to be and we found the first sergeant and he took us out to this piece of flat land that was right next to the, pretty close to Lippe Canal, from east to west of about oh, a couple hundred miles. Germany is lousy for canals. Anyway, when we got over there, he took me up, me and two others, to where these men were in foxholes, and doing their job of keeping the enemy from coming in, and I was the last one he put in place with this one guy and me. His name was Virgil Whitesoul. I got to know him pretty good when he came over when I did. Anyway, he said jump on in. And before I could even jump in, I laid my weapon down and I was gonna jump in, we had three shells hit right around us. It knocked me down and covered me over by three or four feet of mud and dirt, and it filled in the foxhole that he was in, full of that. And I got out from underneath that mud. In fact I had on my GI glasses and the lens and the ring came out on the pivot. It's a wonder I didn't lose the lens. Anyway I got out of that thing and ran towards this ditch which gave me pretty good covering, and then everything quieted down and our first sergeant came out, found us and took us back into where they were. The next morning we were getting ready to move out, he called me and said well OK, Floyd, we need to move out. I said I'm not moving until I find out what happened to Virgil Whitesoul. And well he said go ahead, but be quick about it. So I went out there and the mud was up to his chin, that's how much mud they blew up, and the back of his head was missing.

*Geez.*

**Tom Floyd:** And yet I was standing next to him and getting ready to jump in that hole, and I didn't get a scratch one. So that makes you think about a lot of things.

*I imagine.*

**Tom Floyd:** He was a good man, too.

*Where was he from?*

**Tom Floyd:** He was from Iowa, Waterloo, and fortunately oh, I guess about 40 years later that my son got, he worked for a telephone company, he got me some information on where his family was located, so I connected with them by mail, and then we did a lot of writing. I had a lot of things I could share with them and we went to a reunion in Iowa and we made a deliberate stop in their town and we spent the night with them.

*I bet they appreciated that.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah. He wasn't married, thank goodness, because, but his sister and husband, and they just couldn't believe that I went to all that kind of trouble to let them know about that.

*That's great you did. How long had you known him?*

**Tom Floyd:** I just met him when he and I went up to G Company that same time. He wasn't no old friend from the home. We got to be friends from there. He had his life planned out that he was going to have a junkyard of cars. He was a car fiend. And he was going to go into that kind of business and he never did get the chance to fulfill that. But I still correspond with his sister. We went up there one time and saw 'em in person, and they just couldn't believe that somebody would go to all that kind of trouble. Well, you have good people around, you do a lot of good things.

*Well, I'm sure that definitely made you feel fortunate that you're still here.*

**Tom Floyd:** Oh yeah, yes indeed. I had a couple of close calls and by the grace of God I'm here. I got a little thing here in front of me that I had my Bible in, and let's see, the time of coming out of the Rhine River, we went through a lot of little small towns looking for Gerry's, and finally there was one place in back of a deuce and a half, we pulled up to and this good old man come up there all dressed like a general, and he was, he was a General in 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Division. They called him the Creeping Jesus. Why they did that I have no idea. He called us Doughboys, so you can tell what war he'd been fighting in. But he said I want you guys to go up in this little section of housing and check it out because we got some brand new tanks here and I don't want to lose any. He got, I forget the name of the thing, I'll give it to you in a minute. Anyway, we went out there and there was about three of us, and we went in the houses. It was a beautiful home, two stories, with a big cellar in it. We pushed the door in and told them to come out and used a little German language, and finally we could hear noise going in the cellar. So we opened the cellar up and it was kids, wives, and old grandy's in there. There were no soldiers around there at all, no men, and one of the old ladies, she couldn't have been 4'5", she came up to me and started beating on my chest. She was going to fight the enemy. I grabbed her hand and laughed and told her not to do that, and I don't want her to get hurt. So I had to go upstairs and check out anybody up there. So I got in one room and kicked the door in, and jumped in and



turned behind the door to see if anybody was there, and there was a big old mirror and I rifled up to shoot, and then I realized it was me. I thought that was a timely bit of humor. We needed that.

*Yeah, I bet.*

**Tom Floyd:** But nothing came of it. The tanks that were on the market then, they were going up and down this particular roadway and be sure that everything was clear. They were heading for the inner parts of Germany to wind up this thing before the Russians would. But we weren't quite that fast.

*During this entire time, did you and your fellow soldiers have a pretty good feeling that you guys were winning the war, that you were progressing and moving along and the Germans were retreating?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, I did. Something that I've always wondered about leadership and I always check something maybe some little I don't know, text conversations or words that they would use, and you could get a pretty good feeling for leadership, and I guess of all the men that were leading us to go all the way to the Elbe River, we had one that didn't quite cut the mustard. But the rest of them, I'd go along with them again. The platoon sergeant and the commanding officer of the other platoon. The soldiers, the sergeants, I'd go with them again. I had that much confidence in them. And I had sure missed, missing of being captured or becoming a prisoner, but they always got you out of that fire and helped you get to where you were going. I had some easy times, I had some hard times. Everybody was the same way. But it was important to work together and we did that. That's what I liked about that division. And there were other divisions out there just as good, but this bunch was just exceptionally good. Oh, the name of that tank was the General Pershing.

*Oh, the Pershing tanks, yes sir.*

**Tom Floyd:** The 90 millimeter job, and we rode on that thing for 40 miles. We come to a little community, we had to jump down and go in from the back way and check it out and come on back and be on our way.

*With the exception of the one elderly German lady that hit you, what were most of the German civilians like? Were they basically afraid?*

**Tom Floyd:** Not completely in fear. They were just wondering all right what we were gonna do to them, which was nothing. One place would be interesting to tell you was one night we took all our objectives and we put all our men out on guard posts in a hole, foxhole, things like that, and the CO sent the word down they wanted to get some food sent up to them, so one of us would go out and scout around in this little small town. So there were three of us went to this one house and we banged on the door and made them come to the door and open it up, and we went in there and were checking it out and looking for food, and I got, in one room I saw a huge cabinet of some sort. That thing must have been at least 10, 12-foot long and stood up about 5 feet. So I opened the doors up in that thing, and that thing had nothing but cured hams in it, and all the guys that were out there on guard duty were wanting to know what in the world they would eat, and we'd set up the chow mess the next day. So we ate cured hams all that night long, and then got full. We turned down our own food we had ate so much of it. I thought that was funny.

*What did the German people, did they even say anything?*

**Tom Floyd:** Oh yeah, they were ornery, keep your mouth shut or I'll bop your teeth down your throat. Get nasty. Which I don't particularly like, but you have to do that.

*What about the German soldiers? Did you come in contact with them much, capturing them and that sort of thing?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, a few times. We were really moving. We came out to an open area by a forest and we had a scout that worked with us. He was an old country farmer boy, and that guy was slick as ice. He was so good. He could point out with his tracer bullet where the enemy was. In other words he'd get there and find them and shoot in that direction, and then we knew where to shoot. He was good at that. Whenever he said this is such and such, you can bet your life on it, and he would go out there and find all these places. What was the question, something about weapons?

*I was curious, sir, about the German soldiers themselves, any contact you had with them.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, in this particular thing I was just telling you about, we captured 30 and that was just one small batch. Another unit behind us had at least 200 or 300. They were turned over to me and two other guys, which we didn't want, but we made them double time all the way down there. We got there and we all ran up to this particular officer, said we got some captives out here and we're turning them over. Thank you, sir. And we'd turn around and walk off. I didn't give them a chance to talk to me at all, because it was his responsibility. And we went off and caught up with our unit and moved into smoke territory and make some more arrests so to speak and brought 'em back. The other time, we had an open field, that's the hardest part of war, going across an open field. And they had a P-38, no, it was a fighter, working its way around where we were, and they had a huge field, I guess probably two blocks long that they had to cross to get into the town. So we were spread out in our normal formation that you learn in basic training. And the Gerry's opened up on us. I was one of the lead guys with all the rest of the guys behind me were close to a ditch. They dove in that thing to get out of the fire power, the firing that was going on. I hit the ground and they were peppering me from all around me, but never did hit me. So I started sliding back slowly on my belly in the same direction I was pointed but going backwards. So I was within 15 yards of where the men were in another big ditch. They put up a bunch of fire over that area and I got up and dove in that thing. They my saved my little butt from being killed. But the sad part about the whole thing was the airplane was shot down by the Germans, and come to find out when I came back from oversea and moved to Bolin, Texas, working with my cousin, he had a nephew that was a fighter pilot from the island with the English, and he was on his last day of the war, and it was like within 12 hours of being over with, and he went up and got knocked down and lost. So he didn't have to do it but he wanted to do his sign of final bit of giving to the country.

*Where were you and your men when you found out that Germany had finally surrendered?*

**Tom Floyd:** We were headed towards Magnaburg in the north, a town that's on the Elbe River, and we got in a beautiful home. We made it our outpost and we had another troops around us on some front. For the first time in about 10 days we got a real good night's sleep, and I slept on a couch and they even had a radio and you could pick up London and they were giving all the news that was going on. There was a flash come through like maybe 6 o'clock in the morning

that President Roosevelt had died, and the next thing we heard was big explosions outside, and one of our tanks was out there and a couple of these little what they call those things, those young German boys, they were the cream of the crap is what I called it, they tried to blow this oil tank up and they were laid out with rifle fire before they could do anything else. And boy things were moving pretty fast and Roosevelt died. We were at Magnaburg. Magnaburg was no small city, but our job wound up going through all the houses and apartments and finding any weapons and bringing them on out. That's the way I picked up a German flag they had hid out. I found it and brought it home with me. But nobody got hurt in that tank when they were firing at it.

*So after President Roosevelt had died and your unit kept pushing on, do you remember where you were when you heard that Germany had finally surrendered and the war was over?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, we dropped down to another little town just below this big town Magnaburg, and set up a camp there. It was open, sort of like a police station. They had three or four cots in there that double, triple decked. So we set up there and would get a good night's rest from time to time when we had to go out on guard duty. But we went further south on a patrol to hook up with a Russian, and we found one place there, it was like a little fishing home sitting right on the river. It was well stocked with furniture and more, and we took it and used it for the outpost because the Russians were supposed to come that evening and signal to us and we were gonna go and shake hands and all that jazz. But they never did show up until late morning about 4 o'clock and one of them, the first one through a bunch of underbrush, and this scout I was telling you about that was so good, he was on duty. He knew where the sound was and he knew where to shoot. He got him, killed him. Then the Russians made connection with us later in the morning when it was daylight. But they never did say anything about us killing the soldier. That kind of floored me.

*It was a Russian soldier?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah. He was supposed to be making contact with us, but you hear all that rustling noise, you're not going to take a chance. So that was the only contacts with the Russians that we had.

*What did they seem like in terms of a fighting unit?*

**Tom Floyd:** They were pretty arrogant and I used to feel sorry for them when the Gerry's were blasting the fool out of them when I was still in high school, but I didn't have much love for them after this situation. Oh, one thing that was strange, too, in this little building that we had like a police station, the guys came in it and says you need to come on down to the big old swimming pool. For what? I don't feel like swimming. They unloaded a lot of weapons in that swimming pool. All of the neighbors who lived around there came around and dumped them all in there before we got to their town. So there was some guys out there that got the bright idea of getting some rope or real strong string, put a fish hook on the end of it, and they were casting it out there with a little weight on it and dragging it and pulling out all kind of weapons out of that swimming pool. Well, I got three .22's. I cleaned 'em up, hauled 'em up and sent 'em home to my cousin.

*Wow.*

**Tom Floyd:** In fact, he wore 'em out. But I would like to have kept 'em, but I didn't have any place to keep stuff like that.

*That's neat that they let you take it and send it home though.*

**Tom Floyd:** I was shocked by that. You could do it and the pistol, I had a Luger I took off an officer.

*Yeah, that's a nice weapon, too.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yes it is. And we got through with that, too. I had a paper showing that I had authority to carry that pistol, and they never did ask us anything when we hit Boston coming back.

*So once the war was over and the Germans had surrendered, how long was it before you and your unit were able to come back to the States?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, it was, the thing ended in May and it was the beginning of August. We were up in a town called Hirschberg, it was down in south, southeast corner of Germany, and it sits in a valley and big mountains there, beautiful country, and they had this town there and there was no damage there from the war, and we lived in the houses that they had there. They took all the Germans and moved them to another town, and we had use of their homes until the time we left. So we spent oh, I guess three weeks there maybe before the company began to shrink. A lot of guys were being shipped home to be discharged and my platoon sergeant, he was long gone.

*So they discharged you individually, not as an entire unit.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, individually. We did have a mass formation at Camp Oklahoma which was in France. I forget the French name. Anyway, we had the ceremony of awarding Bronze, Silver, everything like that. I got a Bronze in there, and since then I've gotten three more \_\_\_ for other services. But coming back wasn't too bad. Just outside of Paris, they had the Camp Oklahoma City and there was always something going on there and you could go to Paris and spend a day or two there, or you could go to a resort on the English Channel. It wasn't much of a resort, but you could go there to swim and just lay out in the sun. I went there one time but it was too cold to lay out in the sun. I just sat there and enjoyed the fact that nobody was barking at me to do something.

*So when you got back, did you get on, you said you got back to Boston? Was that were you got back to first?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, that's where we came into Boston. First we came out of La Halle, France, and loaded up on this banana boat, and heading to the Panama Canal, and two days I believe we were out, and then the news came where Japan gave up after dropping the atomic bomb. And we changed direction from going to the south, southwest, we came up north and wound up in Boston, and we were discharged there and they had the big band out there playing all that good stuff and Miles Standish was the camp, and we stayed there about two days and got all our paperwork done and we went home and spent 30 days at home.

*So you went back to New Orleans?*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah, went back reluctantly. I had lost a lot of love for New Orleans when I finally realized what kind of town that was. I still don't like it.

*What was it like the first time you were able to see your dad again?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, it was I guess an exciting time. There was something going on there that I never have quite figured out. Maybe he just didn't have the ability to do the things that you think they should do as far as receiving you back. He was glad I was home and all that sort of stuff, but there just wasn't that touch there. So we had a 30-day leave, and I did that, and claimed myself a lot of old friends and traveled up to a friend and a cousin of mine in Baton Rouge, and spent some time up there with them. Then went on back and I got assigned to Camp Blanding. We helped close that thing down. I didn't have enough time in I guess.

*Where was that located?*

**Tom Floyd:** Florida. Not Tallahassee, it's on the east side of Florida.

*You said you closed down one of the camps there in Florida.*

**Tom Floyd:** They had fighter pilots, all them kind of guys.

*Pensacola maybe?*

**Tom Floyd:** No, I'll find it. Jacksonville. I'm 83 years old. You've got to excuse me. But that was a good camp and in fact they got the 30<sup>th</sup> Division was camped there for a while during the training before going overseas, and they have quite a few monuments there for them and several other units that went to Blanding. Blanding was nice. It was just like being out on the beach and we did well. I worked in the separation \_\_\_\_.

*And you ended up ultimately staying in the reserves for over 20 years.*

**Tom Floyd:** Yeah. When I got down to Mississippi, they were going for my discharge at Camp Shelby, there was I don't know what he was, I think he was an NCO, like maybe a sergeant first class, he was giving a pep talk on joining the Reserve, and I thought for a while why would I want to get in the Reserves? Then I got to thinking and said my age, I was just turning 20, and all the other things have gone on, there's bound to be another war, there's just bound to be. I was thinking all that to myself while I was getting my discharge papers. So I went up to this guy and told him I think I want to put my name on the line. So I did and I didn't have any, I had some mail come from them in the next five years, but nothing else happened. When Korea broke out, really broke out, that wasn't too much after World War II, that I began to realize that I may get called up for it, which I did. They called me up for that and I went to Oris, Texas to get my physical at the naval station, passed that, and went up to the Chamber of Commerce in Beaumont where it was the beginning of our Reserve outfit, and talked to the warrant officer up there and he said hold onto your clothes. You're not going in the service. I said why? He said they want to establish whoever is in the Reserves now and get this thing going. And I got some literature on that stuff here, how they wanted to set those things up. So I did. So I got an audit to report to Fort Hood in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, and I got an order right after that to rebuking those things, so I was not to be called up because I was going to be a part of a new Reserve unit in Beaumont, Texas. So I went in as a PFC and I wound up as an EA. I put a lot of time in there and I worked hard at it because we had some good people in there, and I never regretted it one bit and my wife didn't like it too well, but so much for that. It's been good to us. The military,

the government has, on a couple of occasions I'd like to knock 'em in the head, but they were awful good to us.

*Well sir, I tell you it's been an honor for me to be able to interview you and with this program, Commissioner Patterson is a veteran and I'm a veteran and a lot of people here at the Land Office are veterans, and even those that aren't appreciate your service and your sacrifice, and what we are trying to do with this program is to save these stories so that future generations can hear them and they don't forget 'em. And one of the last questions I usually always ask is if there's anything you'd want to say to somebody that might be listening to this years from now about your time in the service or anything?*

**Tom Floyd:** Well, I'll say something about that but let me tell you one little story. When we were crossing the Rhine River, everybody, the men in the boat they laid down flat on their stomach and spread their legs, and you put your head right up between your legs up to his butt in order to get moving there. Anyway, I was curious, I raised my head up just to see who was around us, and I saw one boat floating back, backwards, and the guy had the motor tilted up. So I figured uh-oh, he's going to be a shooting duck will be happening to him. So I've always wondered what happened to that boat. Well, my platoon sergeant at the time, he wound up being a full colonel when he went back in the service after he went to school, he made a trip back to Germany where we crossed the river and he wanted to see it again. It's quite a, the Rhine River is quite a place to be, and there's another guy in the bus riding with his grandson and telling the guy would he please hurry up, he'd like to get there and see that. And John, my platoon sergeant asked the guy was he there the night of the crossing? He said yeah, I was in there and my boat went out on us. Said were you the one? He said yeah. He said what happened? He said well we sheared a pin, and they floated down the river in that fire of Germany, and they took that motor up and put a pin in it and brought the men back to where they were supposed to land, didn't lose a man. I thought that was a magnificent thing.

*That is great.*

**Tom Floyd:** That he had to wait all these years to find out what happened.

*That's right, wow.*

**Tom Floyd:** He was a great guy. This John Nolan, he was my Platoon Sergeant and he went ahead and went to school and came out as a Colonel.

*That's great.*

**Tom Floyd:** He was one of the best men out of the whole unit. We're still in touch.

*That's great.*

**Tom Floyd:** One other thing I wanted to tell you. It may not make much difference, but if I can find it, how many people do you work like on this?

*Well, I'm the only one, but I'm the one person that does this program, but there's 600 some employees at the General Land Office, so there's a lot of people that work in this agency, but we do everything from veteran's homes and vet home loans to offshore oil leases and oil spill prevention, and we have archives and old documents that go back to Spanish Land Grant days.*

*So the General Land Office does a little bit of everything. We have in our archives we have documents that are written by Stephen F. Austin and we have a discharge paper for David Crockett, so our goal is that these interviews that we're doing with veterans like yourself will be put in those archives and hopefully preserved for a couple of hundred years as well so people can listen to them years from now as a piece of living history.*

**Tom Floyd:** Well good. I made a bunch of what I call a Walk in Time, it's a bio of some of the stuff I've been telling you about.

*Well sir if you want to send us a copy, we'd be honored to get it.*

**Tom Floyd:** I'll have to send you one.

*Yes sir.*

**Tom Floyd:** I'll need your address.

*Sure.*

**Tom Floyd:** OK.

*I'll go ahead and give it to you now. It's 1700 North Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78701.*

**Tom Floyd:** OK.

*And you can just put General Land Office, attn. James Crabtree and it'll get to me.*

**Tom Floyd:** OK. All right. OK. If there's any other way I can help you, I'd be glad to.

*Yes sir, well sir it's been a real honor for us to be able to interview you and what we'll do once this interview is over is we'll make copies of this onto CD disk and we'll send you copies of it and then eventually we'll get the transcript all made up and we'll send you a copy of the transcript and then if you have any photos as well that you'd want us to put on our web site, you can either send us copies or if you want, you can send us the originals and we can scan 'em and send the originals back to you. But if you have any pictures that you want us to put on the web site, we can do that as well.*

**Tom Floyd:** OK, all right. I'll go for myself to see.

*Well sir, I really appreciate it and hope you have a good rest of the day.*

**Tom Floyd:** Oh I will.

*All right sir, so give me a call if you need anything.*

**Tom Floyd:** Sure will.

*Yes sir, all right, take care.*

**Tom Floyd:** To you, too.

*Bye bye.*

**Tom Floyd:** Bye bye.

*[End of recording]*